A DECLARATION OF THE Lord General and his Councel of Officers;

Shewing the Grounds and Reasons for the Dissolution of the late PARLIAMENT.

LONDON,
Printed by *Hen. Hills*, and *Tho. Brewster*, Printers to the ARMIE: And by special Order Reprinted at *Dublin*, by *Will. Bladen*, 1653. April 22.

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A

DECLARATION

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PARLIAMENT. 1653.

A Declaration of the Lord General and his Councel of Officers.

OUR Intention is not to give an account at this time, of the grounds which first moved us to take up Arms, and engage our lives and all that was dear unto us in this cause; nor to mind in this Declaration the various Dispensations through which Divine Providence hath led us, or the wonders the Lord hath born, and the many signal testimonies of acceptance, which he hath given to the sincere endeavours of his unworthie servants, whilest they were contesting with the many and great difficulties as well in the Wars, as other transactions in the three Nations; being necessitated, for the defence of the same cause they first asserted, to have recourse unto extraordinary actions, the same being evident by former Declarations published on that behalf.

After it had pleased God not onely to reduce *Ireland*, and give in *Scotland*, but so marvellously to appear for his People at *Worster*, that those Nations were reduced to a great degree of Peace, and *England* to perfect quiet, and thereby the Parliament had opportunitie to give the People the harvest of all their labor, bloud, and treasure, and to settle a due libertie both in reference to Civil and Spiritual things, whereunto they

were obliged by their dutie, their engagements, as also the great & wonderful things which God had wrought for them, it was matter of much grief to the good and well affected of the Land, to observe the little progress which was made therein, who thereupon applyed to the Armie, expecting redress by their means: notwithstanding which, the Armie being unwilling to meddle with the Civil Authoritie, in matters so properly appertaining to it, it was agreed, That his Excellency and Officers of the Armie, which were members of Parl. should be desired to move the Parliament to proceed vigorously in reforming what was amiss in Government, and to the settling of the Common-wealth upon a foundation of Justice and Righteousness, which being done, we hoped that the Parliament would seasonably have answered our expectation: but finding (to our grief) delays therein, we renewed our desires in an humble Petition to them, which was Presented in *March* last, and although they at that time signifying their good acceptance thereof returned us thanks, and referred the particulars thereof to a Committee of the House, yet no considerable effect was produced, nor any such progress made, as might imply their real intentions to accomplish what was Petitioned for: but on the contrarie there more and more appeared amongst them an Aversion to the things themselves, with much bitterness and opposition to the people of God, and his Spirit acting in them, which grew so *prevalent*, that those Persons of Honor and Integritie amongst them, who had eminently appeared for God and the Publick good, both before and throughout this War, were rendered of no further use in Parliament,

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than by meeting with a corrupt Partie to give them countenance to carrie on their ends; and for effecting the desire they had of perpetuating themselves in the Supream Government. For which purpose the said Partie long opposed, and frequently declared themselves against having a new Representative: and when they saw themselves necessitated to take that Bill into Consideration, they resolved to make use of it to recruit the House with Persons of the same spirit and temper, thereby to perpetuate their own sitting. Which intention divers of the activest amongst them did manifest, labouring to perswade others to a consent therein: And the better to effect this, divers Petitions preparing from several Counties for the continuance of this Parliament, were encouraged, if not set on foot by many of them.

For obviating these evils, the Officers of the Armie obtained several meetings with some of the Parliament, to consider what fitting means and remedie might be applyed to prevent the same: But such endeavours proving altogether ineffectual; it became most evident to the Armie, as they doubt not it also is to all considering Persons, that this Parliament, through the corruption of some, the jealousie of others, the ill attendance and negligence of many, could never answer those ends which God, his People, and the whole Nation expected from them: But that this Cause which the Lord hath so greatly blessed, and bore witness to, must needs languish under their hands, and by degrees be wholly lost, and the lives, liberties, and comforts of his People delivered into their Enemies hands.

All which being sadly and seriously considered by the honest People of this Nation, as well as by the Armie, and Wisdom and Direction being sought from the Lord, it seemed to be a dutie incumbent upon us, who had seen so much of the power and presence of God going along with us, to consider of some more effectual means to secure the Cause, which the good People of this Common-wealth had been so long engaged in, and to establish Righteousnes and Peace in these Nations.

And after much debate it was judged necessarie, and agreed upon, That the Supream Authoritie should be by the Parliament devolved upon known Persons, men fearing God, and of approved integritie, and the Government of the Common-wealth committed unto them for a time, as the most hopeful way to encourage and countenance all Gods People, Reform the Law, and administer Iustice impartially: hoping thereby the People might forget Monarchie, and understanding their true interest in the Election of succeeding Parliaments, may have the Government settled upon a true Basis, without hazard to this glorious Cause, or necessitating to keep up Armies for the defence of the same.

And being still resolved to use all means possible to avoid extraordinarie courses, we prevailed with about Twentie Members of Parliament, to give us a Conference, with whom we freely and plainly debated the necessitie and justnes of our Proposals on that behalf: and did evidence what those, and not the Act under their Consideration, would most probably bring forth something answerable to that Work, the foundation whereof,

of, God himself hath laid, and is now carrying on in the World.

The which notwithstanding found no acceptance, but instead thereof, it was offered, That the way was to continue still this present Parliament, as being that from which We might reasonably expect all good things. And this being vehemently insisted upon, did much confirm us in our apprehensions; That not any love to Representative, but the making use thereof, to recruite, and so to perpetuate themselves, was their aym.

They being plainly dealt with about this, and told, That neither the Nation, the honest Interest, nor We our selves, would be deluded by such dealings: They did agree to meet again the next day in the after-noon for mutual satisfaction, it being consented to by the Members present, that Endeavours should be used, that nothing in the mean time should be done in Parliament, that might exclude or frustrate the Propolals before mentioned.

Notwithstanding this, the next morning the Parliament did make more haste than usual, in carrying on their said Act, being helped on therein by some of the Persons engaged to us the night before, none of them which were then present endeavouring to oppose the same; and being readie to put the main Question for consummating the said Act, whereby our aforesaid Propolals would have been rendered void, and the way of bringing them into a fair and full Debate in Parliament obstructed.

For preventing whereof, and all the sad and evil consequences, which must upon the grounds aforesaid,

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have ensued, and whereby at one blow the interest of all honest men, and of this glorious Cause, had been endangered to be laid in the dust, and these Nations imbroyled in new Troubles, at a time when our Enemies abroad are watching all advantages against us, and some of them actually ingaged in War with us; We have been necessitated, though with much reluctancie, to put an end to this Parliament; which yet We have done (we hope) out of an honest heart; preferring this Cause above our names, lives, families, or interest how dear soever, with clear intentions, and real purposes of heart, To call to the Government Persons of approved Fidelitie and Honestie: believing, That as none wise will expect to gather Grapes of Thorns, so Good men will hope, That if Persons so qualified, be chosen, the fruits of a Just and Righteous Reformation, so long prayed and wished for, will (by the blessing of God) be in due time obtained, to the refreshing of all those good hearts, who have been panting after these things.

Much more might have been said, if it had been our desire to justifie our selves, by aspersing others, and raking into the Mis-Government of Affairs; but we shall conclude with this, That as we have been led by Necessitie and Providence, to act as We have done, even beyond and above our own thoughts and desires, so We shall, and do, in that of this great Work which is behind, put our selves wholy upon the Lord for a blessing, professing we look not to stand one day without his support, much less to bring to pass any of the things mentioned and desired, without his assistance: And therefore do solemnly desire and expect, That all men,

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as they would not provoke the Lord to their own destruction, should wait for such Office as he shall bring forth, and to follow their business with peaceable spirits; wherein, We promise them Protection by his assistance.

And for those who profess the fear and love of the Name of God, that seeing, in a great measure for their sakes, and for Righteousness sake, We have taken our lives in our hands, to do these things, they would be instant with the Lord day and night in Our behalf, that We may obtain grace from him. And seeing We have made so often mention of his Name, that we may not do the least dishonor thereunto, which indeed would be our confusion, and a stain to the whole Profession of Godliness.

We beseech them also to live in all humilitie, meekness, righteousness, and love one towards another, and towards all men, that so they may put to silence the ignorance of the foolish, who falsly accuse them: and to know, That the late great and glorious dispensations, wherein the Lord hath so wonderfully appeared in bringing forth these things, by the travel and blood of his Children, ought to oblige them so to walk in the wisdom and love of Christ, as may cause others to honor their holy Profession, because they see Christ to be in them of a truth.

We do further purpose before it be long, more particularly to shew the Grounds of our Proceedings, and the Reasons of this late great Action and Change, which in this we have but hinted at.

And we do lastly Declare, That all Judges, Sheriffs, Justices of Peace, Mayors, Bayliffs, Committees, and

Commissioners, and all other Civil Officers, and Publick Ministers whatsoever, within this Commonwealth, or any parts thereof, do proceed in their respective Places and Offices: and all Persons whatsoever, are to give Obedience to them as fully as when the Parliament was sitting.

Signed in the Name, and by the Appointment of his Excellency the Lord General, and this Council of Officers.

William Malyn, *Secret.*

IRELAND.

By the Commissioners of the Commonwealth of England *for the Affairs of* Ireland.

THe Declaration before going, coming to our knowledge, We hold it our dutie to Publish the same unto all who are intrusted with the Mannagement of Publick Affairs in this Countrey, and to mind them that it is now their dutie (more than ordinarie) notwithstanding the present Alteration, to Act carefully and industriously in their several Charges, and diligently to discharge their respective Trusts; that the Common Enemie may not have Advantage from hence to

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work new Disturbance against the Publick Peace and Welfare: And that such as are in the service of the Common-wealth in this Land, must expect to be called to a strict account for their neglect herein. And in regard the present posture of Affairs are such, as extraordinarily concern the Interest and Welfare of all good People, We hold it our dutie earnestly to exhort them unto a special fervent wrestling with the Lord, by humble Prayer and Supplication for Wisdom and Strength unto those his Servants, on whom the Burthen and Care of preserving the Common-wealth in Peace, and settling the same in Righteousness, doth principally lie. For which end, We do appoint Wednesday the fourth of *May* next, and that Day seven-night being the eleventh of *May*, to be set apart for solemn seeking the face of the Lord by all his People in *Ireland* on that behalf. Dated at *Dublin* 29 of *April*, 1653.

Charles Fleetwood. *Miles Corbet.*
Edm. Ludlow. *Io. Iones.*

Ordered, That Mr *Bladen* Printer, do Print the Declaration from his Excellencie the *Lord General*, and his Councel of Officers, together with this Order.

Charles Fleetwood. *Miles Corbet.*
Edm. Ludlow. *Io. Iones.*